



Coping with the stress of a military deployment: Psychological and physical health

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Purpose

- Present psychological and physical health findings based on data from the U. S. Army, Europe & Seventh Army and U. S. Army Medical Research Unit-Europe OPTEMPO/PERSTEMPO study.



Outline

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Summary of Findings

This technical brief presents findings from a two-year longitudinal study designed to assess the impact of operations and personnel tempo on soldier and unit readiness, and focuses on issues of coping with the stress of military deployments.

- Using coping as a moderator, the impact of deployment stressors on soldier physical and psychological health was assessed.
- Higher overall deployment stressors predict lower psychological and physical health
 - Active coping can moderate this relationship such that when stress is high, and soldiers use **high active** coping, soldiers report better physical and psychological health.
- Higher family-deployment stressors predict lower psychological and physical health
 - Passive coping can intensify this relationship such that when family stress is high, and soldiers use **high passive** coping, soldiers report poorer psychological wellbeing scores.
- Soldiers can and do use active coping strategies in dealing with real-world military deployment stressor



Introduction

- Coping style can buffer the effects of stressors on physical and psychological health
- Military deployments have unique stressors
 - dangers of the work environment
 - stressors related to family separation
- This study investigates the role of coping style in moderating the impact of stress on soldier physical and psychological health



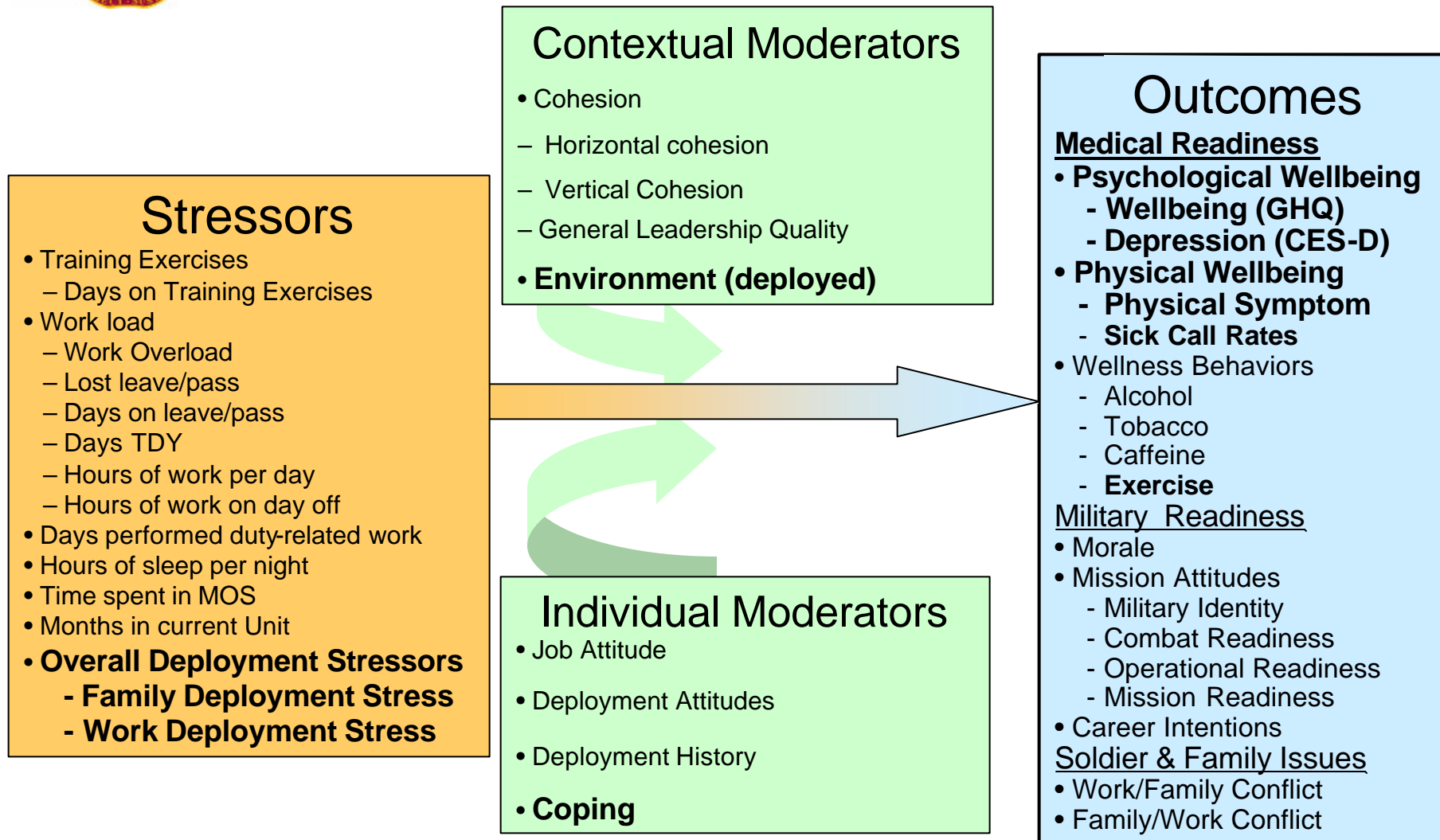
International Relevance of Peacekeeping

Nations involved in peacekeeping operations as of May 2001
(supplying humanitarian assistance, observers, police, and/or troops)

Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guinea, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Senegal, Singapore, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Zambia, Zimbabwe



Overview of Research Program





Method



PROCEDURE

- Surveys

SAMPLE

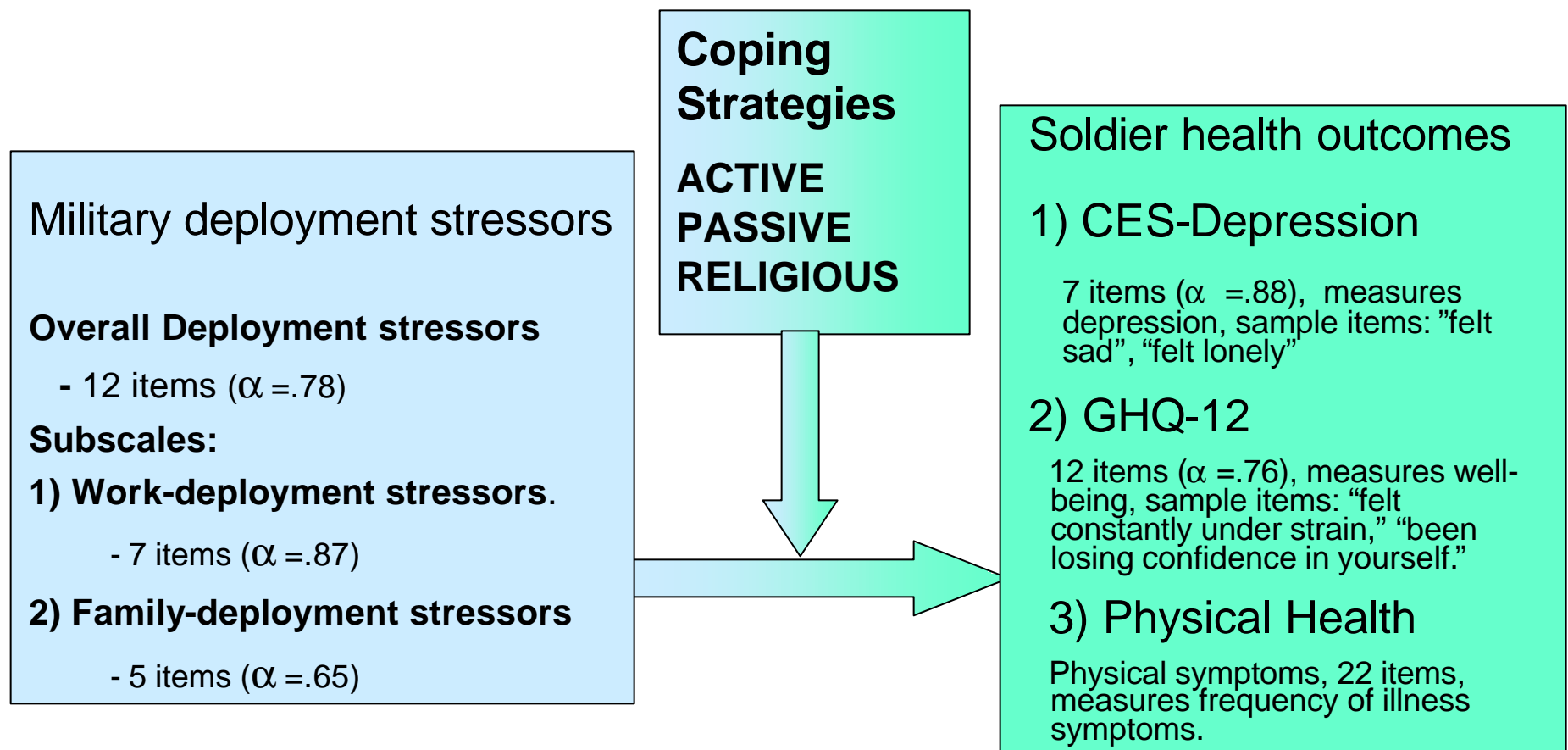
- 114 US Army soldiers who were deployed to non-combat peacekeeping missions (Kosovo and Southwest Asia)





Coping and Health on Deployment

- Using coping as a moderator, the impact of deployment stressors on soldier physical and psychological health was assessed.





Measures: Overall Deployment Stress

Stressors unique to military deployment (sample items)

Work Deployment Stressors

- concerns about accidents
- possible terrorist attacks
- safety of soldiers

Family Deployment Stressors

- health problems of family members
- negative communications with spouse
- family finances





Measures: Coping

The 17-item coping scale had three factors:

- Active
- Passive
- Religious



Sample Coping Scale Items

Active coping

- Look for information about possible choices
- Change what is causing the stress
- Decide what needs to be done

Passive coping

- Become apathetic or just don't care
- Avoid thinking about the problem
- Withdraw physically from the situation

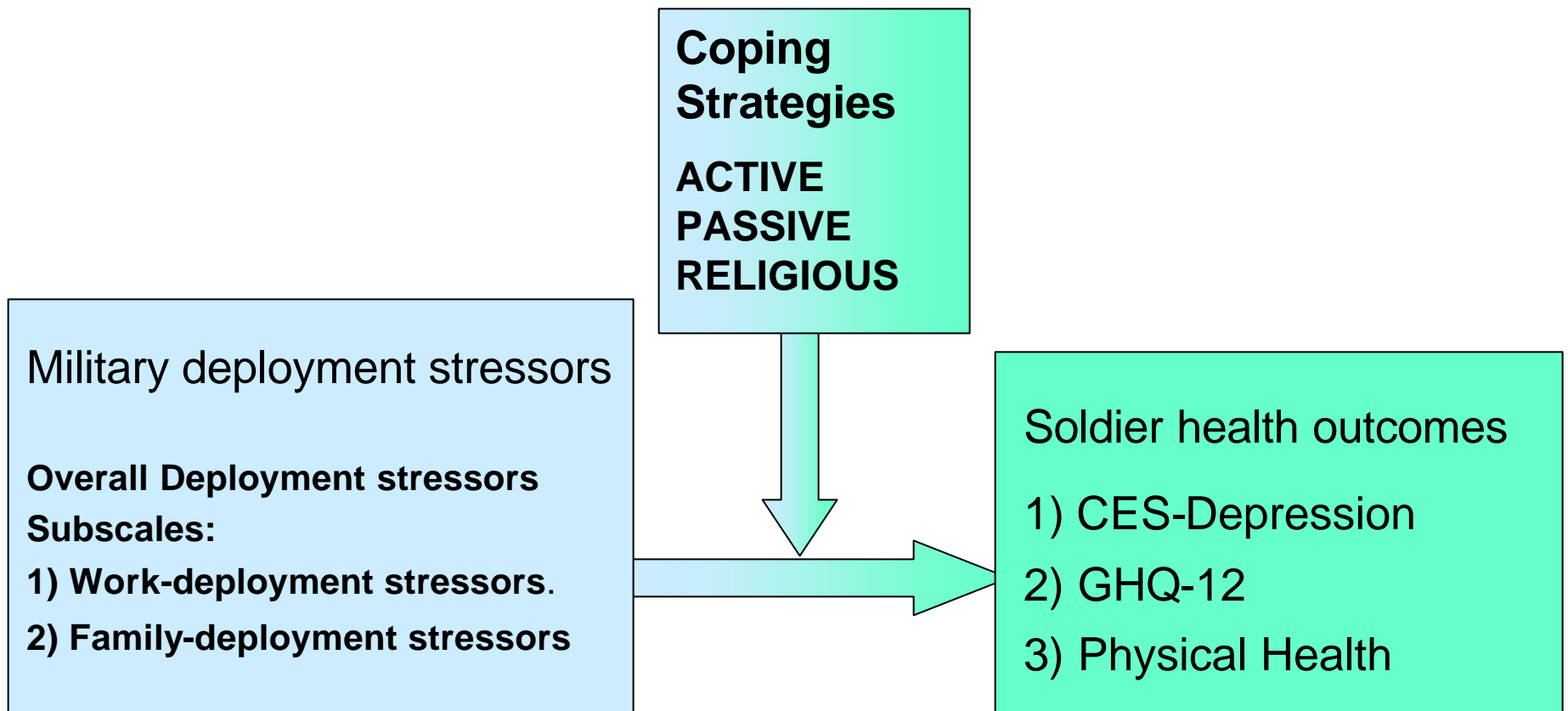
Religious coping

- Turn to prayer or spiritual thoughts
- Turn to my religious beliefs
- Seek religious guidance religious



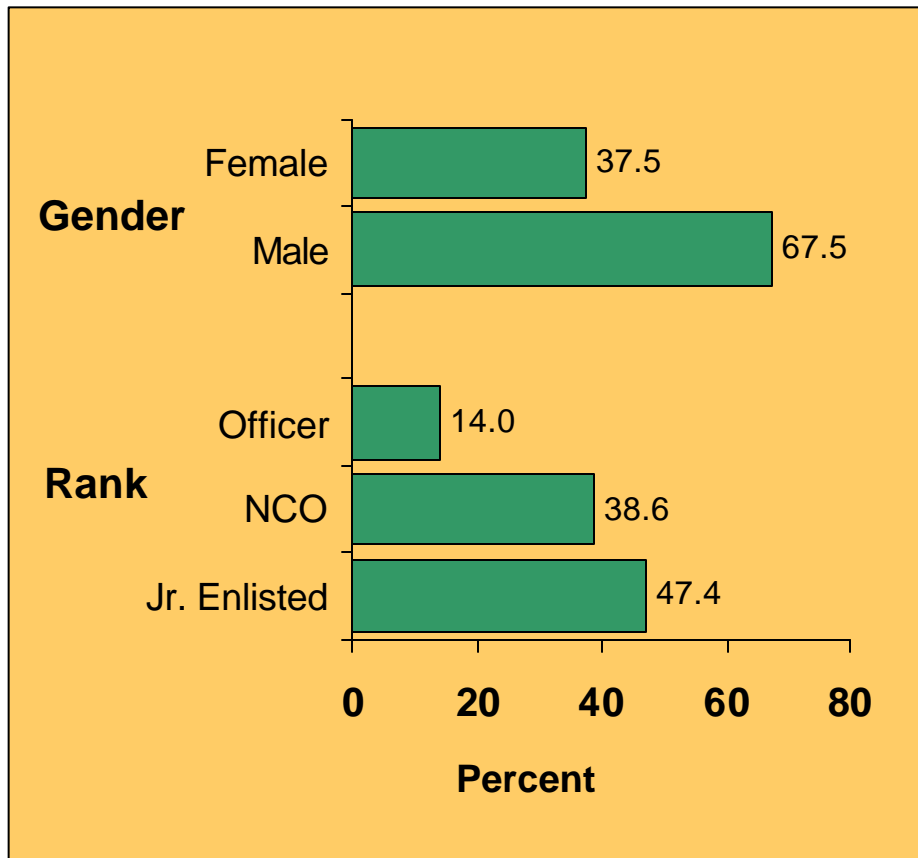
Results

- Descriptives
- Moderated regressions





Sample Demographics (N=114)



Marital Status

| | |
|------------|-------|
| Married: | 57.0% |
| Single: | 33.3% |
| Sep./Div.: | 9.7% |

Race

| | |
|----------------|-------|
| White: | 42.5% |
| African Amer.: | 35.4% |
| Hispanic: | 10.6% |
| Asian: | 6.2% |
| Other: | 5.3% |

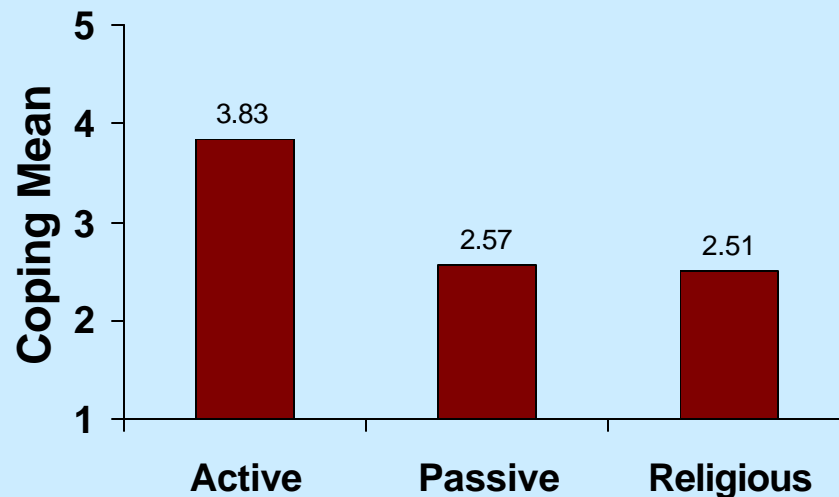
Education

| | |
|-------------------|-------|
| High School: | 36.3% |
| Some college: | 46.0% |
| Bachelors degree: | 14.2% |
| Graduate degree: | 3.5% |

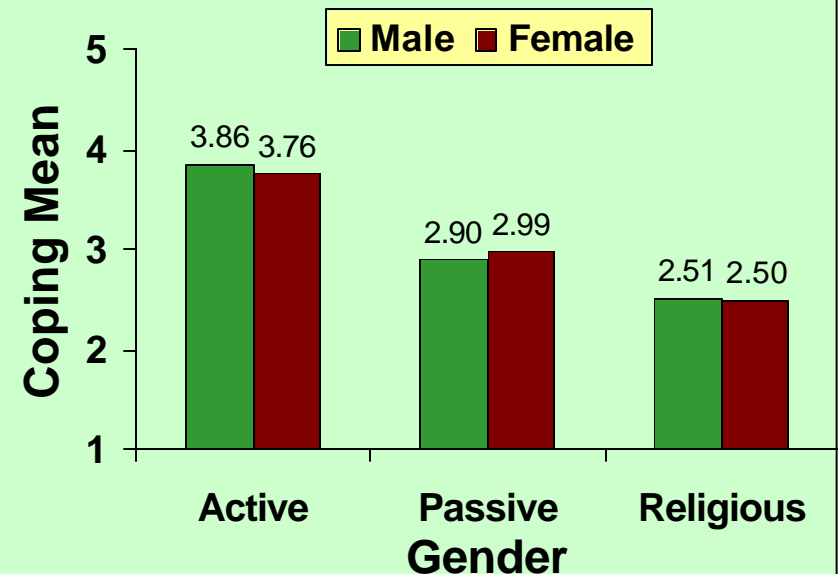


Type of Coping

Overall, active coping was used to a greater extent than was passive and religious coping.



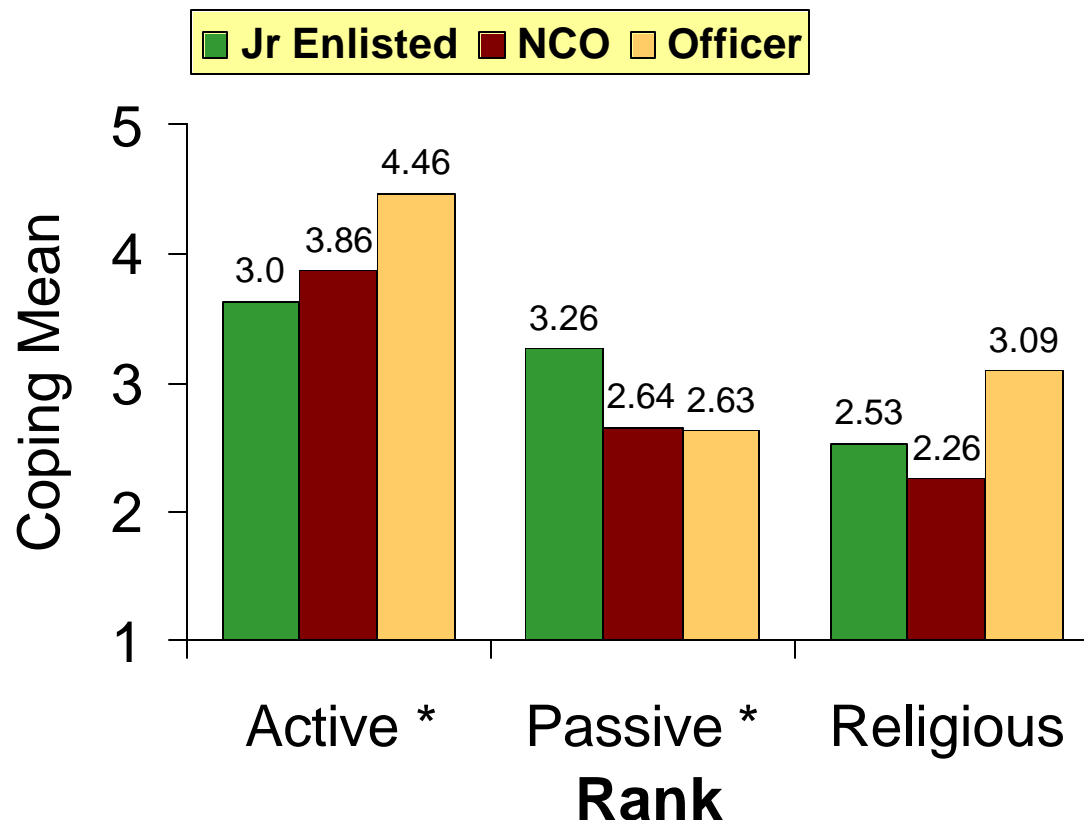
There were no significant differences in active, passive or religious coping styles between men and women.





Type of Coping by Rank

- Officers reported higher levels of active coping ($F(2, 109) = 6.35, p < .002$) than Junior enlisted and NCOs, while junior-enlisted soldiers reported higher levels of passive coping than NCOs and officers ($F(2, 109) = 7.16, p < .001$)

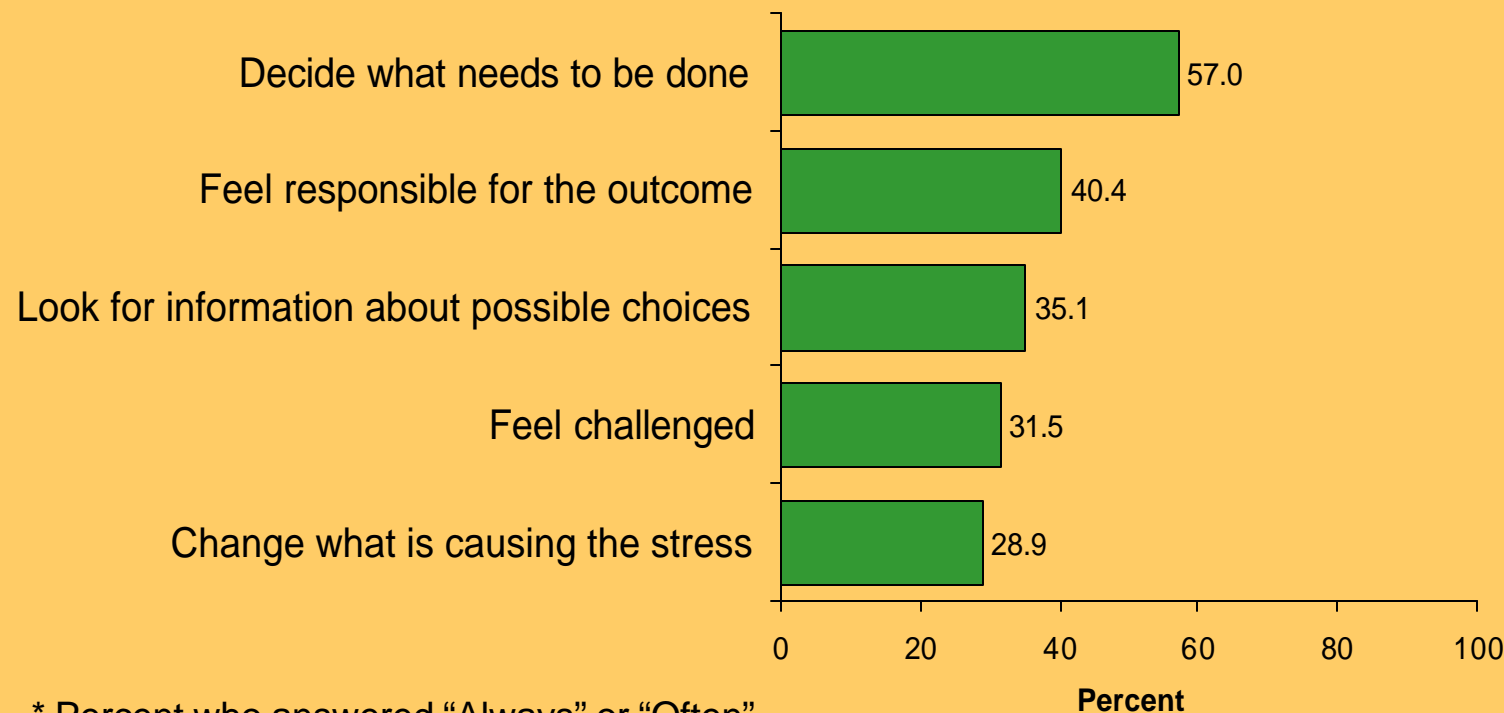




Type of Coping – Active

- The most common active coping strategy is “decide what needs to be done.”

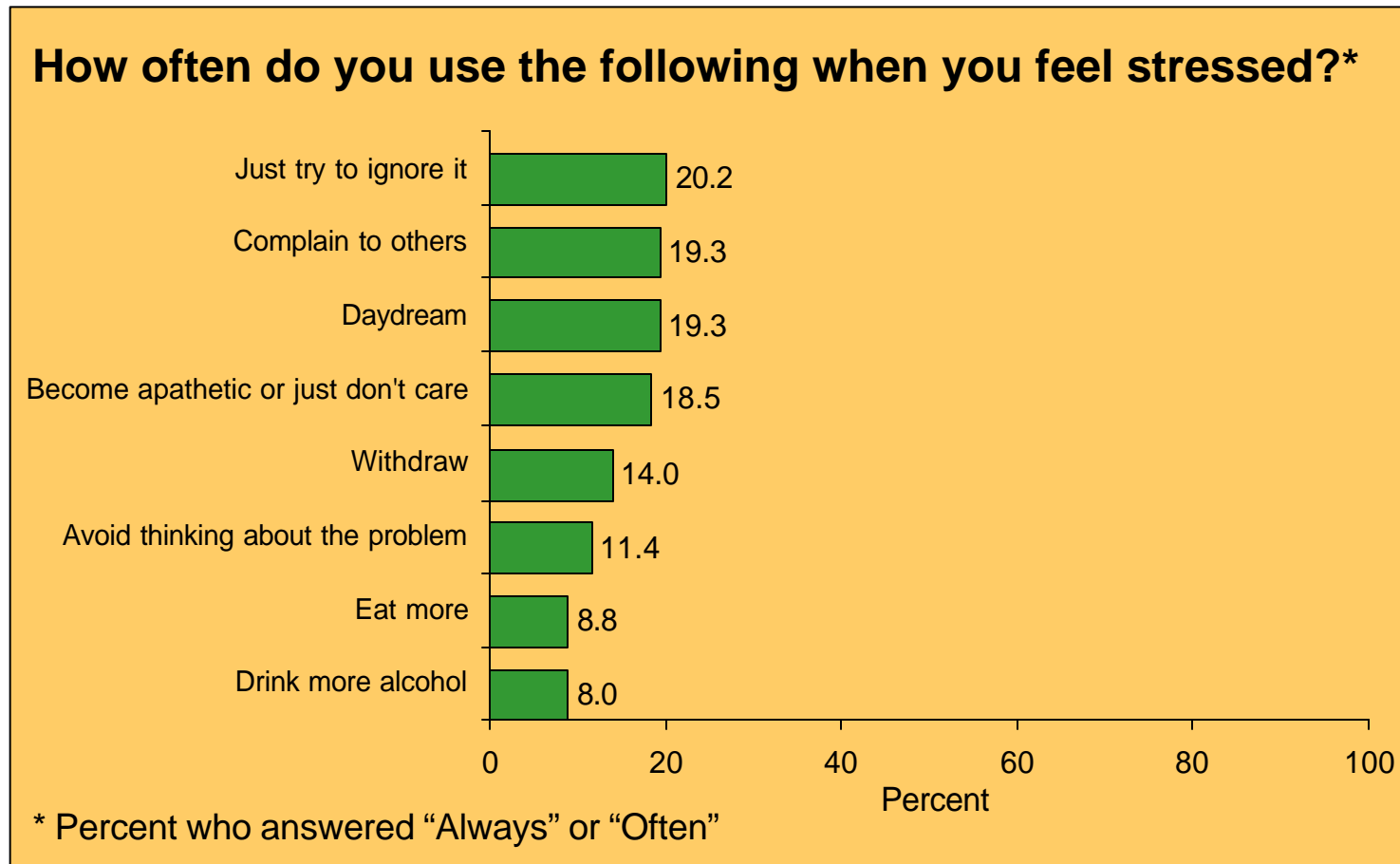
How often do you use the following when you feel stressed?*





Type of Coping – Passive

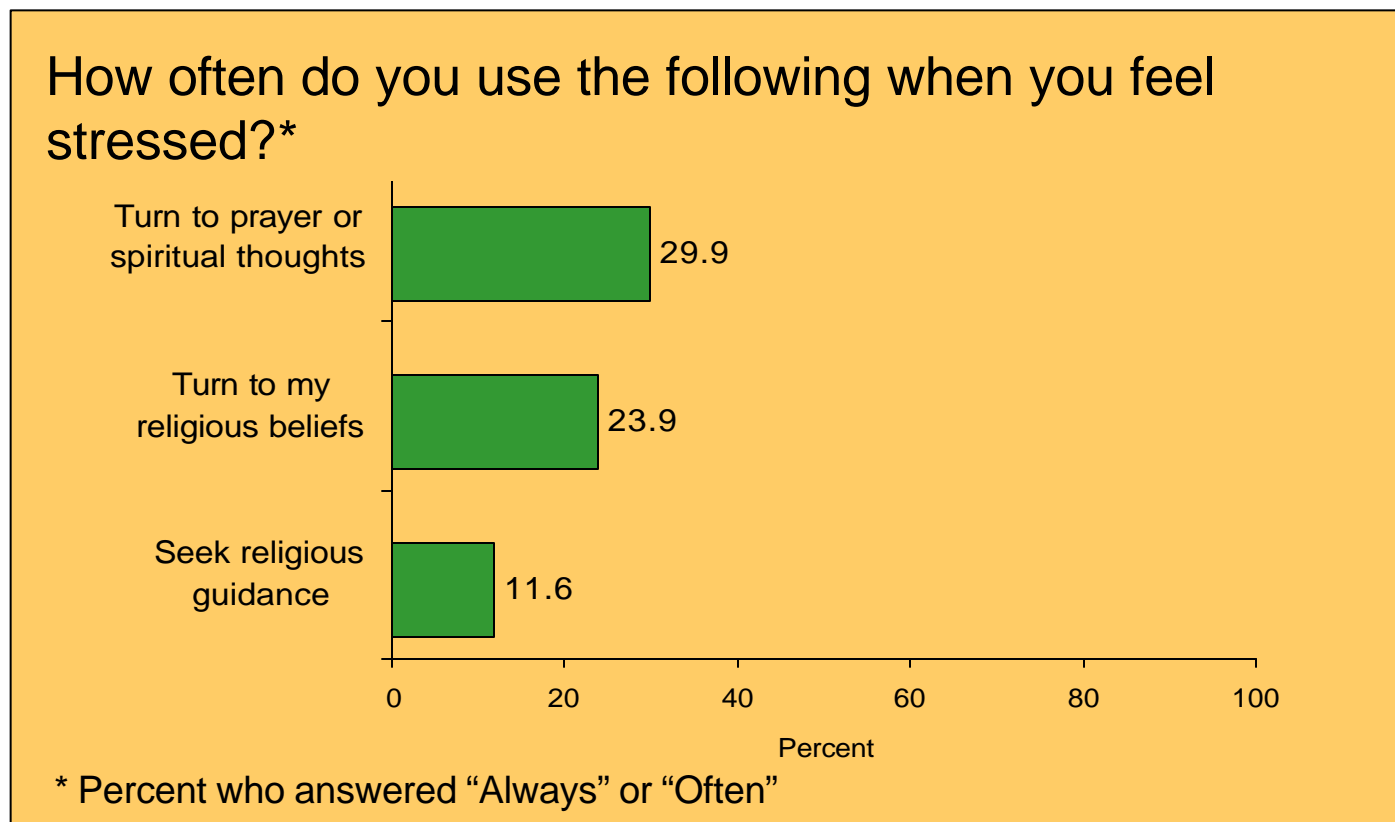
- The most common passive coping technique used was “just try to ignore it.”





Type of Coping – Religious

- The most commonly used religious coping strategy was “turn to prayer or spiritual thoughts.”





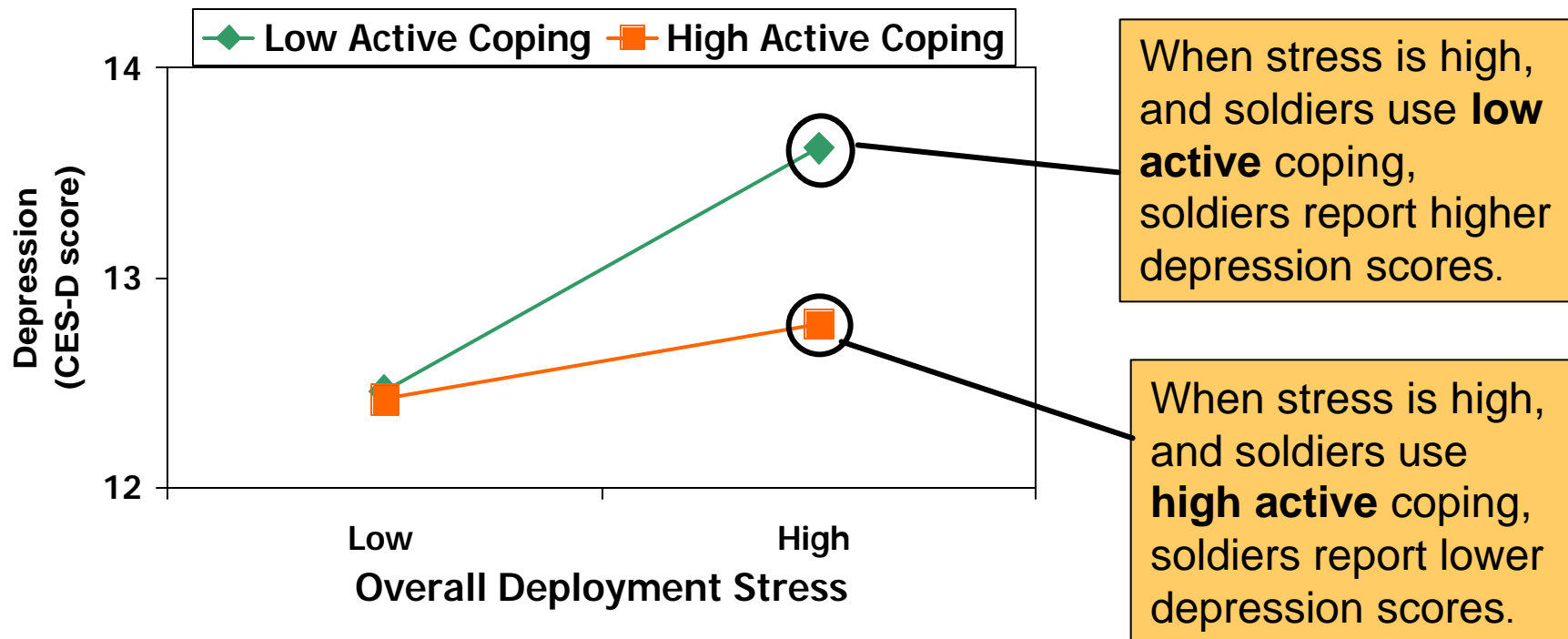
Results of Moderated Regression: Overview

- Active coping buffered the effects of overall stress levels on health
- Passive coping style intensified the effects of family stressors on health
- Religious coping style neither buffered nor intensified the effects of stressors on health



Deployment Stressors & Depression

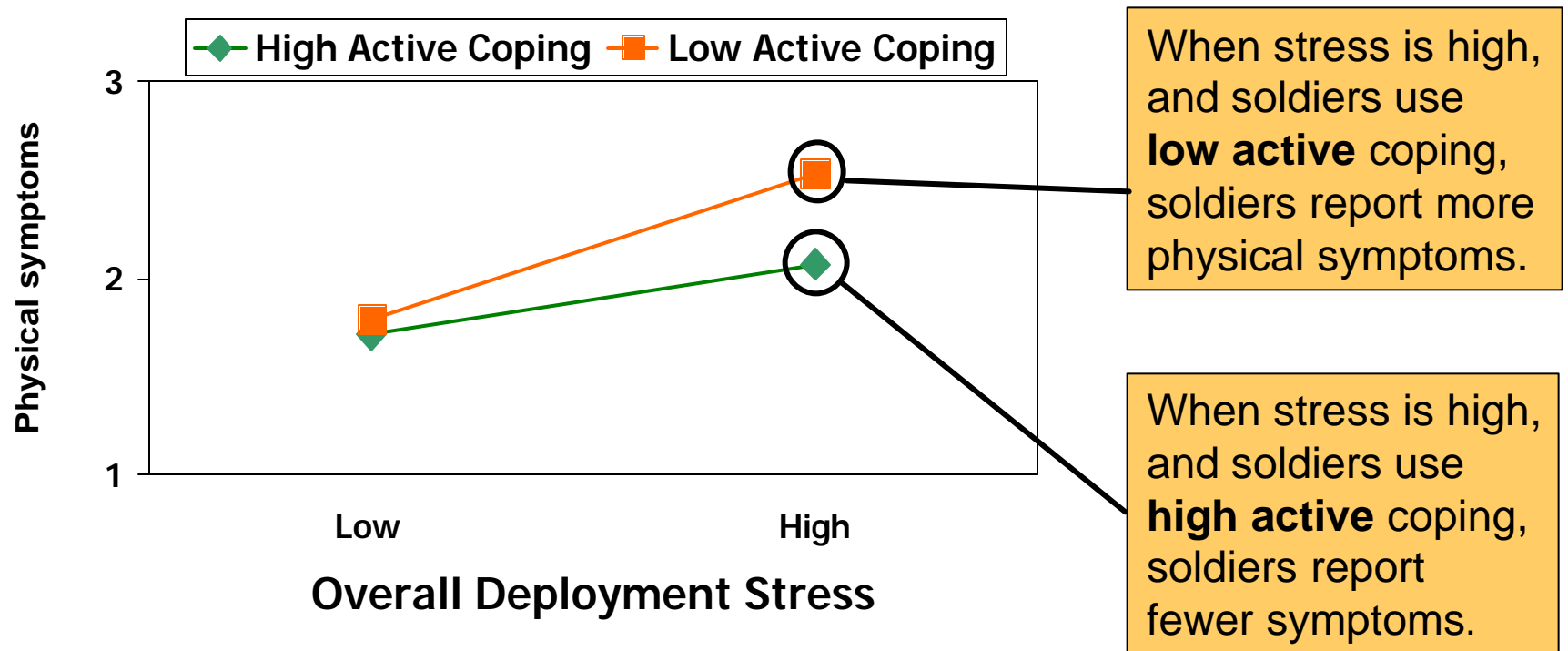
- Using active coping as a moderator, the impact of overall deployment stressors on soldier wellbeing was assessed.
- Active coping buffered the effects of overall stress levels
High deployment stressors + low active coping = more depression





Deployment Stressors & Physical Symptoms

- Using active coping as a moderator, the impact of overall deployment stressors on soldier physical health was assessed.
- Active coping buffered the effects of overall stress levels
High deployment stressors + low active coping = more physical symptoms

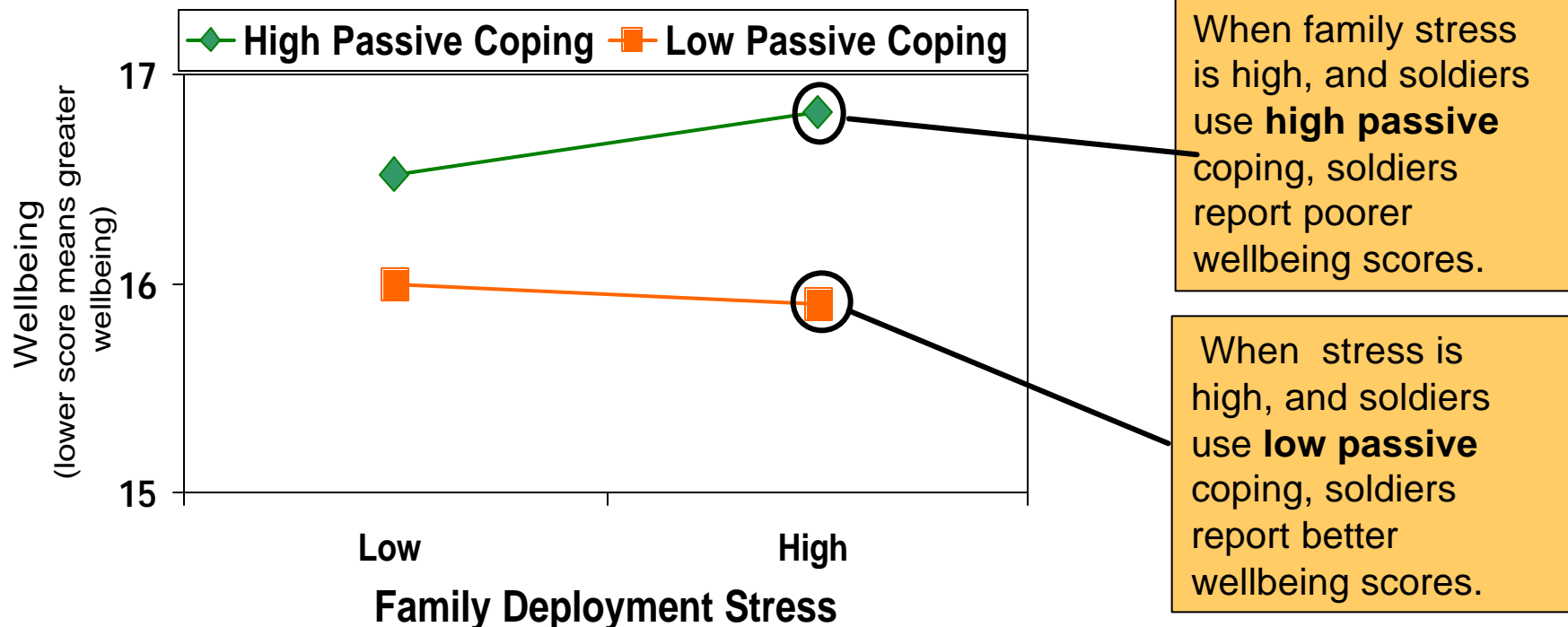




Family Stressors & Psychological Distress

- Using passive coping as a moderator, the impact of family deployment stressors on soldier wellbeing was assessed.
- Passive coping style intensified the effects of family stressors

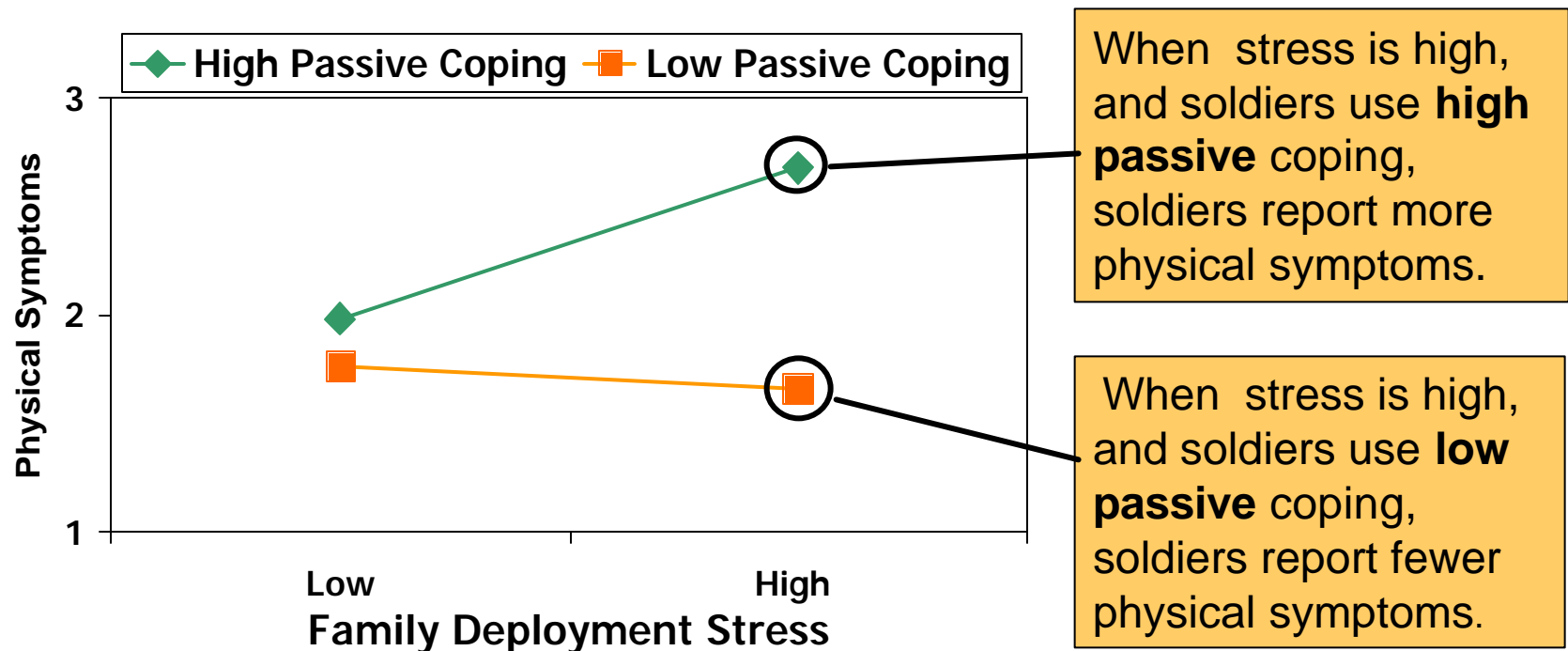
High family-deployment stressors + high passive coping = more psychological distress





Family Stress & Physical Symptoms

- Using passive coping as a moderator, the impact of family deployment stressors on soldier physical health was assessed.
- Active coping buffered the effects of family stress levels
High family deployment stressors + high passive coping = more symptoms





Conclusions

- Higher overall deployment stressors predict lower psychological and physical health
 - Active coping can moderate this relationship
- Higher family-deployment stressors predict lower psychological and physical health
 - Passive coping can intensify this relationship
- Work-deployment stressors were not moderated by coping
- Soldiers can and do use active coping strategies in dealing with real-world military deployment stressors



Recommendations: Active Coping

Enhance active coping

- Train active coping skills
- Provide information about deployment
- Disseminate information about stress and its effects
- Encourage exercise





Recommendations: Passive Coping

Reduce passive coping

- Provide time off to relax
- Make communication links to family available
- Increase social involvement



Mail call



Point of Contact

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Soldier OPTEMPO Survey

U.S. Army Medical Research Unit-Europe, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research
U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command



Privacy Act/Informed Consent Information

ver: 29 Nov 1999

OPTEMPO Survey

1) **Authority:** 10 U.S.C. Sections 136 and 5 U.S.C. 552a; Executive Order 9397

2) **Purpose:** USAMRU-E/WRAIR is conducting a study of soldiers' responses to OPTEMPO and PERSTEMPO.

3) **Uses:** I understand the purpose of this survey is to develop information to benefit soldiers and units, and that I may not directly benefit from this survey.

4) **Disclosure:** Disclosure of your Social Security Number is voluntary. I consent to the use of my answers by staff of the U.S. Army Medical Research-Europe, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (USAMRU-E/WRAIR), to compile statistics of group data.

I understand my name or any other data from which I could be recognized will not be available to anyone beyond the professional staff conducting the study.

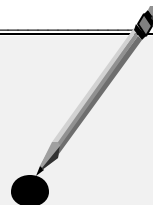
I understand I have the right to withdraw my consent to participate in the study at any time.

I understand USAMRU-E/WRAIR may access other military records identified by, or filed under, my social security number in conjunction with this survey.

Instructions:

- Use a #2 pencil
- Mark your answer by filling in the bubble completely like this:

RESULTS ARE CONFIDENTIAL!



SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER :

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
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YOUR AGE:

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TODAY'S DATE:

| MONTH | DAY | YEAR |
|-------|-----|------|
| JAN | 0 | 2000 |
| FEB | 1 | 2001 |
| MAR | 2 | 2002 |
| APR | 3 | 2003 |
| MAY | 4 | |
| JUN | 5 | |
| JUL | 6 | |
| AUG | 7 | |
| SEP | 8 | |
| OCT | 9 | |
| NOV | | |
| DEC | | |

GENDER:

Female ☐
Male ☐

CURRENT MARITAL STATUS:

Single (Never Married) ☐
Married ☐
Separated ☐
Divorced ☐
Widowed ☐

Indicate Highest Level of Education obtained:

Some High School ☐
High School ☐
Diploma/ GED ☐
Some College ☐
Bachelor's Degree ☐
Graduate Degree ☐

Number of children living at home:

0 ☐
1 ☐
2 ☐
3 ☐
4 ☐
5 ☐
6 or more ☐

ETHNICITY:

African-Am/Black ☐
Asian ☐
Hispanic ☐
White ☐
Other ☐

YOUR UNIT:

Squad: _____
Platoon: _____
Company: _____
Battalion: _____

COMPONENT:

☐ Army
☐ Navy
☐ Air Force
☐ Marines

STATUS:

☐ Active
☐ Reserves
☐ Guard
☐ Civilian
☐ Other?

RANK:

E ☐ 1 ☐
O ☐ 2 ☐
WO ☐ 3 ☐
4 ☐
5 ☐
6 ☐
7 ☐
8 ☐
9 ☐

WHAT IS YOUR MOS?

(Answer in 3 digits only. Example: a "67B would bubble in "6," "7," and "B.")

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|------------------------------|
| 0 | 0 | A | K | U |
| 1 | 1 | B | L | V |
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| 8 | 8 | I | S | Other: <input type="radio"/> |
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| <p>Do you have a family member enrolled in the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP)?</p> <p>Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/></p> | <p>How many years have you been in the military? <i>Example: If you've been in 9 years, you should write in and bubble in "0" and then "9".</i></p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>0</td> <td>9</td> </tr> </table> | 0 | 9 | <p>How many hours of work have you averaged per day in the past week?</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table> | | | <p>Think about your "days off" during the past week. On average, how many hours did you perform duty-related work during a "day off"?</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| <p>Is your spouse in the military?</p> <p>Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/></p> <p>Not Married <input type="radio"/></p> | <table border="1"> <tr> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>6</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>7</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>8</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>9</td> </tr> </table> | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | | 4 | | 5 | | 6 | | 7 | | 8 | | 9 | <table border="1"> <tr> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>6</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>7</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>8</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>9</td> </tr> </table> | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | | 3 | | 4 | | 5 | | 6 | | 7 | | 8 | | 9 | <table border="1"> <tr> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>6</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>7</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>8</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>9</td> </tr> </table> | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | | 3 | | 4 | | 5 | | 6 | | 7 | | 8 | | 9 |
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| <p>How many days have you been on a training exercise in the past 6 months? <i>Example: If it is 19, you should write and bubble in "0" and then "1," and "9".</i></p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> <td>9</td> </tr> </table> | 0 | 1 | 9 | <p>In the past week, how many days have you performed military related work?</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td></td> </tr> </table> | | <p>How many days of leave and/or passes have you taken in the past 12 months?</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table> | | | | <p>How many days of leave and/or passes have you lost in the past 12 months?</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| <p>How many days have you been TDY in the past 6 months?</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table> | | | | <p>How many hours of sleep have you averaged per night in the past week?</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table> | | | <p>Have you ever served in combat? (e.g., Vietnam, Persian Gulf, Grenada, Panama, Somalia)</p> <p>Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/></p> <p>Have you ever served on a peacekeeping or humanitarian mission?</p> <p>Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/></p> | <p>How many months in total, have you served in the Balkan Region (e.g. Kosovo, Albania, Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia, Hungary)?</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table> | | | <p>In total, how many deployments have you completed that lasted more than 30 days? (not including training exercises or unaccompanied tours)</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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Please use the following scale to tell us how much you **agree** or **disagree** with the statements below:

1. I am proud to be in the U.S. Army
2. I am an important part of my company
3. What I do in the Army is worthwhile
4. My company is ready for combat
5. I am confident in my unit's mission-essential equipment
6. I think we are better trained than most other companies in the Army
7. I think the level of training in this company is high
8. I have real confidence in my unit's ability to perform its mission
9. If we went to war tomorrow, I would feel good about going with my unit
10. I think my unit would do a better job in combat than most U.S. Army units
11. The members of my unit are cooperative with each other
12. The members of my unit know that they can depend on each other
13. The members of my unit stand up for each other
14. The officers in my unit establish clear work objectives
15. The officers in my unit are interested in my personal welfare
16. The officers in my unit delegate work effectively
17. The officers in my unit let soldiers know when they have done a good job
18. The officers in my unit avoid micromanaging soldiers' work
19. The officers in my unit are interested in what I think and how I feel about things
20. The NCOs in my unit establish clear work objectives
21. The NCOs in my unit are interested in my personal welfare
22. The NCOs in my unit delegate work effectively
23. The NCOs in my unit let soldiers know when they have done a good job
24. The NCOs in my unit avoid micromanaging soldiers' work
25. The NCOs in my unit are interested in what I think and how I feel about things
26. The leaders in this company would lead well in combat
27. I am impressed by the quality of leadership in this company
28. My chain-of-command works well

In your opinion, what is the ideal length of time in **months** that a deployment should last?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
 12^+ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

In your opinion, what is the ideal **number** of deployments that a soldier should go on over a 3 year period?

[illegible]

Which best describes your current active-duty Army **career** intentions? Select one option.

| | |
|---|-----------------------|
| 1. Definitely stay in until retirement (or longer) | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. Probably stay in until retirement | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. Definitely stay in beyond my present obligation, but not necessarily until retirement | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. Undecided about whether to stay after completion of my current obligation | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. Probably leave upon completion of my current obligation | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6. Definitely leave upon completion of my current obligation | <input type="radio"/> |

When you **leave** active duty, do you plan on serving in the Reserves or National Guard?

Yes Undecided No Not Applicable

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

1. Your personal morale
2. Morale in your unit
3. Cohesion in your unit
4. Quality of life in your unit
5. Mission readiness of your unit
6. Level of training in your unit
7. Standards of discipline in your unit
8. Your level of burnout
9. Your level of motivation
10. Your level of energy
11. Your level of drive

Very Low

Low

Medium

High

Very High

1. Felt you couldn't get going
2. Felt sad
3. Had trouble getting to sleep or staying asleep
4. Felt everything was an effort
5. Felt lonely
6. Felt you couldn't shake the blues
7. Trouble keeping your mind on what you were doing















1. been able to concentrate on whatever you're doing?
2. lost much sleep over worry?
3. felt that you are playing a useful part in things?
4. felt capable of making decisions about things?
5. felt constantly under strain?
6. felt that you couldn't overcome your difficulties?
7. been able to enjoy your normal day-to-day activities?
8. been able to face up to your problems?
9. been feeling unhappy and depressed?
10. been losing confidence in yourself?
11. been thinking of yourself as a worthless person?
12. been feeling reasonably happy, all things considered?

[illegible]

[illegible]

-

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | ○ | 0 | ○ |
| 1 | ○ | 1 | ○ |
| 2 | ○ | 2 | ○ |
| 3 | ○ | 3 | ○ |
| | | 4 | ○ |
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| | |
|---|---|
| 0 | ○ |
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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 0 | | 0 |
| 1 | ○ | 1 |
| 2 | ○ | 2 |
| 3 | ○ | 3 |
| 4 | ○ | 4 |
| 5 | ○ | 5 |
| 6 | ○ | 6 |
| 7 | ○ | 7 |
| 8 | ○ | 8 |
| 9 | ○ | 9 |
| | ○ | |

cigarettes ☐

cigars ☐

smokeless tobacco ☐

other (specify) ☐

1. I rarely feel my work is taken for granted.
2. My superiors generally appreciate the way I do my job.
3. The organization recognizes the significance of the contributions I make.
4. My job is very challenging.
5. It takes all my resources to achieve my work objectives.
6. Other people know me by the long hours I keep.
7. The soldiers in my unit think that what's expected of us is clear.
8. The soldiers in my unit think that what's expected of us is reasonable.
9. I work at my full capacity in all of my job duties.
10. I strive as hard as I can to be successful in my work.
11. When I work, I really exert myself to the fullest.
12. I feel responsible for my job performance.
13. I am committed to my job.
14. How well I do in my job matters a great deal to me.
15. How I do in my job influences how I feel.
16. I have personal control over my job performance.
17. Once I am given instructions, I am pretty much left alone to do my job.
18. I am allowed to do my job without constant supervision from others.
19. I am very satisfied with my job in the Army.
20. I like my job in the Army.
21. I am satisfied with the kind of work I do on my job.
22. I have so much work to do that I cannot do everything well.
23. I never seem to have enough time to get everything done.
24. My job leaves me with little time to get things done.
25. I feel that what I am doing is important for accomplishing my unit's mission.
26. I am making a real contribution to accomplishing my unit's mission.
27. What I do helps accomplish my unit's mission.

[illegible]

1. The demands of my work interfere with my home and family life.
2. The amount of time my job takes up makes it difficult to fulfill family responsibilities.
3. Things I want to do at home do not get done because of the demands my job on me.
4. My job produces strain that makes it difficult to fulfill family duties.
5. Due to work-related duties, I have to make changes to my plans for family activities.
6. The demands of my family or spouse/partner interfere with work-related activities.
7. I have to put off doing things at work because of demands on my time at home.
8. Things I want to do at work do not get done because of the demands of my family or spouse/partner.
9. My home life interferes with my responsibilities at work such as getting to work on time, accomplishing daily tasks, and working overtime.
10. Family-related strain interferes with my ability to perform job-related duties.

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| o | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
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Do you have any comments? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please write them in the space provided below.

Do you have any comments? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please write them in the space provided below.

[illegible]

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